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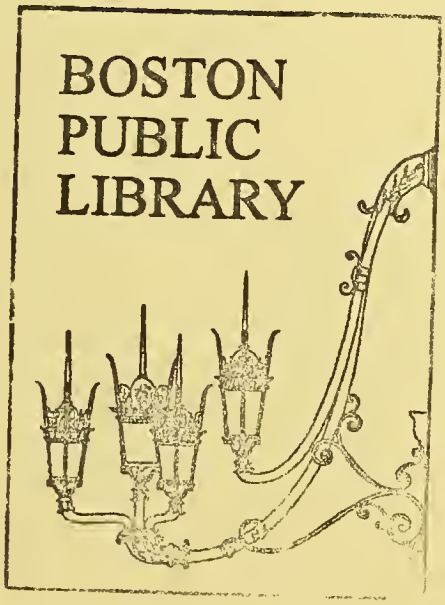

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Suburbanization slowdown and return of people to the city; emerging population patterns in the Boston Metropolitan Region.

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Alexander Ganz
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Research Department
September 12, 1974

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SUBURBANIZATION SLOWDOWN AND RETURN OF PEOPLE TO THE CITY; EMERGING POPULATION PATTERNS IN THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN REGION

Recently published U.S. Census Bureau estimates of the 1972 population in all of the Nation's counties reveal the emergence of a new and significant pattern of population growth in the Boston Metropolitan Region. A slowdown in suburbanization has brought the rate of population increase in the suburban counties of the Boston Metropolitan Region to half that of the 1950-60 decade and three-fourths that of the 1960-70 decade. (See the attached table.) In contrast, Suffolk County, encompassing Boston, has been experiencing population growth since 1970, following two decades of decline. If these trends were to continue, - and the demographic, social, economic and political factors involved suggest that they might - by the end of the 1970's, growth rates in the central city and the suburban areas of the Boston Metropolitan Region may be very similar, marking the end of the postwar suburbanization flow.

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Factors bringing about the slowdown of population growth in the suburban counties of the Boston metropolitan region include the following:

- end of the baby boom of the 1950s which had spurred suburbanization;

- concentration of the Nation's population growth in the 25 to 34 year age group, and the preference for city living, on the part of many middle class young adults;

- lack of growth in jobs in the metropolitan area since 1970, and a loss of manufacturing jobs in the suburban counties, in contrast to the gain of 220,000 jobs between 1960 and 1970;

- improvement in public facilities, housing, urban amenities and the quality of life in Boston central city;

- growth in services activity jobs in Boston central city.

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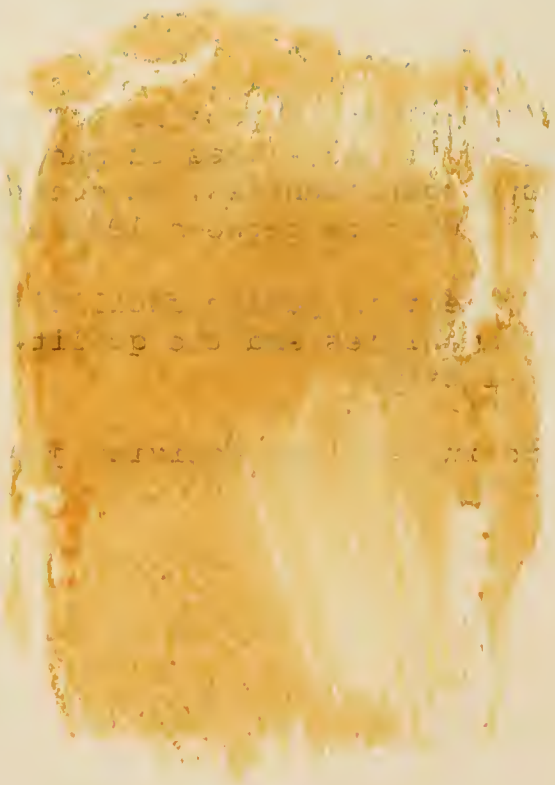

POPULATION OF THE BOSTON METROPOLITAN REGION COUNTIES

	1950	1960	1970	1972	1950-60	1960-70	1970-72
	(Thousands)				(Annual Rates of Change, in Percent)		
Total Metropolitan Region Counties	3,065.4	3,357.5	3,715.7	3,767.2	0.9	1.0	0.7
Essex	522.4	568.8	637.9	649.4	0.9	1.1	0.9
Middlesex	1,064.6	1,238.7	1,398.4	1,418.4	1.5	1.2	0.75
Norfolk	392.3	510.3	604.9	609.7	2.7	1.7	0.4
Plymouth	189.5	248.4	339.3	350.2	2.8	3.0	2.5
Suffolk (Boston)	896.6	791.3	735.2	739.5	-1.1	-0.7	0.3
Sub-Total Suburban Counties	2,168.8	2,566.2	2,990.5	3,027.7	1.7	1.1	0.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

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